

Sermon to the Saints of God which are at Topeka – Sunday, April 2, 2017

Remember Lot's wife. – Luke 17:32

Though it is the second shortest verse in the English Bible (next to 'Jesus wept' at John 11:35), the power, urgency and minute by minute relevance to us of this great exhortation cannot be overstated. We have often preached, and I maintain today – with great urgency, that this verse ought to be opened up and preached from every pulpit. It is notable that Christ, in all of his preaching on earth (that we generally associate with the first 4 books of the New Testament - though all the word is His and is Him), only commands us to remember two persons with specificity: Himself and Lot's wife.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. – Lk. 22:19

And

Remember Lot's wife. – Luke 17:32

A word of caution here: it is important to first get to the right sense of the word 'remember,' that we can properly heed the warning expressed here. The Greek word that is translated in Lk. 17:32 as 'remember' is *mnemoneuo* (mney-mon-yoo'-o) - it is the same root for the word 'mnemonic' that we use today (as in mnemonic device – or some technique used to help to remember a thing, or a sequence of things). The Greek word means:

- 1) to be mindful of, to think of and feel for a person or thing
- 1b) to hold in memory, keep in mind, to make mention of

The English word 'remember' means:

- 1) have in or be able to bring to one's mind an awareness of (someone or something that one has seen, known, or experienced in the past). *"I remember the screech of the horn as the care came toward me."* synonyms: recall, recollect; antonyms: forget, overlook
- 2) do something that one has undertaken to do or that is necessary or advisable. *"did you remember to mail the letters?"* synonyms: be sure, be certain; antonyms: neglect
- 3) used to emphasize the importance of what is asserted. *"you must remember that this is a secret."*

It's the second and third of those meanings that we will be applying. Christ wasn't saying: "Draw into recall, or recollect, from time to time, Lot's wife." He was saying: "KEEP Lot's wife in remembrance, as a constant, vital example of warning to you and have that remembrance

influence your mind and heart. We often look at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as we are commanded to do, as an example of a region of ‘civilization’ that was ripe for destruction at the hand of God.

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. – Jude 7

And we often tie the 6 verses in Luke 17 that lead up to verse 32, and verse 32, to the warning signs of destruction, and what it will look like upon Christ’s return (as that is what scripture states). And we rightly tie Lot’s wife to that destruction – but the exhortation of Christ here given is first and foremost to his people, and has a wider meaning than just its tie to the conditions of sexual immorality that prevailed in Sodom (as evidenced, for example, by the men from every quarter of Sodom surrounding Lot’s house and demanding that he send Lot’s two guests outside, that they may ‘know’ them). This was not only about societal acceptance of sexual perversion – it was that, but not only that. Christ admonished us to “Remember Lot’s wife” – a person whose very name we don’t know, but whose circumstance we are all too dangerously familiar with, as we will – Lord willing – flesh out this morning. There are few warnings in scripture more solemn than this. And it is a solemn warning, when we think of the person that Jesus names. He does not bid us remember Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or Sarah or Hanna or Ruth. NO! He singles out one whose soul was lost forever, and warns us. He cries to us, “Remember Lot’s wife!” It is a solemn warning, when we consider the subject Jesus is upon. He is speaking of His own second coming to judge the world; He is describing the dreadful state of unreadiness in which many will be found. The last days are on His mind when He exhorts, "Remember Lot's wife!" It is a solemn warning, when we think of the people to whom it was first given. The Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples; He was not addressing the scribes and Pharisees, who hated Him — but Peter, James and John and many others who loved Him; yet even to them, He thinks it good to address that specific caution, in relation to his second coming. Even to them He says, "Remember Lot's wife!" It is a solemn warning, when we consider the manner in which it was given. He does not merely say, "Beware of following, take heed of imitating, do not be like Lot's wife." He uses a different word: He says, "Remember (*mnemoneuo*)." He speaks as if we were all in danger of forgetting the subject; He stirs up our lazy memories; He bids us keep the case before our minds. He cries, "Remember Lot's wife!" I submit to you all, beloved, that a proper, full remembrance of Lot’s wife is not only vital to our walk – but can only be accomplished by looking at both the context of Lot and his wife in their lives, and in looking closely at the verses that precede and follow that commandment given at Luke 17:32, and the context in which they are given. So, let us consider the scripture:

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they

say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together. – Luke 17:20-37

Poole on verses 20-21: *After being asked the foolish, mocking question by the scribes and Pharisees, Christ now disregards those dogs, and accommodates this reply to the disciples (the kingdom of God is not within the Pharisees); just as on many other occasions, when he was provoked by wicked men, and seized the opportunity of giving instruction. In this manner God disappoints their malice, while the truth, which is maintained in opposition to their sophistry, is the more fully displayed. The word observation is here employed by Christ to denote extraordinary splendor; and he declares, that the kingdom of God will not make its appearance at a distance, or attended by pompous display. He means, that they are greatly mistaken who seek with the eyes of the flesh the kingdom of God, which is in no respect carnal or earthly, for it is nothing else than the inward and spiritual renewal of the soul. From the nature of the kingdom itself he shows that they are altogether in the wrong, who look around here or there, in order to observe visible marks (of pomp or splendor, for instance). "That restoration of the Church," he tells us, "which God has promised, must be looked for within; for, by quickening his elect into a heavenly newness of life, he establishes his kingdom within them." And thus he indirectly reproves the stupidity of the Pharisees, because they aimed at nothing but what was earthly and fading. It must be observed, however, that Christ speaks only of the beginnings of the kingdom of God; for we now begin to be formed anew by the Spirit after the image of God, in order that our entire renovation, and that of the whole world, may afterwards follow in due time.*

I humbly submit to you, beloved, that from verse 22 on (beginning, “And He said unto His disciples...), he is addressing His disciples – and all that good teaching, including the exhortation to ‘Remember Lot’s wife,’ is primarily addressed to his disciples - and by extension, us.

Moving down a few verses, I’m going to focus on the days of Lot, rather than both they and the days of Noe (for purposes of brevity, as largely similar zeitgeists, or spirits of their times, are being described). So – the days of Lot. Before we get to the verses in Luke 17 that describe the days of Lot, let us take a brief synopsis of what we know of Lot. We have the benefit of many words about Lot and the days that he lived in. We know that Lot was Abraham’s nephew, and that they were close kin in fellowship. We know that Lot was a righteous man, who while living in Sodom was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked from day to day (2Pe. 2:7-8). We know that Lot received great deliverance on at least two occasions – when God sent Abraham (then known as Abram) to liberate him and others from capture at the hand of King Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14) and at the hand of God at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the 5 cities of the plains (Gen. 19). We also know that for a great long while, Abraham and Lot dwelt together and had close communion, but at some point decided to separate from each other’s company:

And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram’s cattle and the herdmen of Lot’s cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. – Gen. 13:1-9

Those two men separated, to keep from being in strife with one another. What in the world? It was a great error for Abraham and Lot to think to separate – and what was the reasoning? Prosperity. They couldn’t come up with any other solution, other than separating out to protect their prosperity and riches, as if that was the right thing to do? How about thinning out the herds by giving some of them to servants who had served them well, and staying together? How about just releasing some of the herds (or some of the bickering herdsmen)? They would think to separate close communion, as men of God, to keep their coffers growing? These righteous men made a grievous error – looking away from the need to be separate from the world and cleave to each other’s Godly counsel and fellowship. Now we all know it had to happen, and many times

what men mean for evil, God means for good. It does not mean, however, that it was judgment that was based, in that moment of decision, upon ministering unto each other in earnest and maintaining their families in God-centered lives.

Then Lot pitched his tents toward Sodom:

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly. – Gen. 13:11-13

Ranchers usually need to stay close to the herd – to ‘tend to the cows’ and to oversee if they have ‘ranch hands’ – but *big* ranchers usually end up hiring people to take care of the whole operation. I don’t know if that happened in the case of Lot – but we do know that he didn’t stay in those rancher tents. He eventually moved into the city of Sodom. And when he was carried out captive by Chedorlaomer, and Abraham delivered him, he returned to Sodom *again*. What in the world? Just some background to keep in mind for a bit later.

Now back to the text of Luke 17:28:

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; - Luke 17:28

What do those pairings mean? Everyone eats and drinks, just to stay alive. Most people plant and build (same reason). Nearly everyone effectuates trades of some sort (to get stuff to plant and build with). Most expositors say that these pairings paint a word picture of prosperity – that the times Lot lived in were marked by great prosperity and ease (which would also imply relative peace from invasion and good weather with rhythmic seasons, at the very least). There is no doubt but that this language speaks to not just a socioeconomic state of affairs, but also what dominated the mindshare of the people of that society – what held preeminence in their minds. Do we really think that the Lord was merely describing the state of affairs in Sodom, so that his disciples would know what that looked like? NO! It was the preamble to his admonition at verse 32:

Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. – Luke 17: 29-33

They indulged their sensual and mental appetites, and put away the evil day far from them. Worldliness! Having one’s mind consumed, preoccupied and titillated by the things of this world.

Trapp says of verse 32 - Remember Lot's wife: *Who either out of curiosity or covetousness turned her back, and she was turned. We are as hardly drawn off the world as a dog from a fat morsel.* Good words to heed. The danger of *worldliness* is omnipresent in the church, and is a pernicious and subtle, yet wholly ruinous notion – for we are always in danger of trying to straddle things, having one foot in the world and the other on our religious faith and duty, all the while claiming that the things of the world have no impact on our hearts and mindshare. High wages and light work will never make up for a constant round of worldliness and sin. Let us be provided with *safeguards* and *antidotes* against the disease that is around us and, not least, let us become familiar with the story of Lot's wife. This is the heart of the matter, and it is a matter of the heart – so let us get there.

Lot's wife. We do not know her name, though several Hebrew scholars give various versions: Ilith, Edith, Adith. No one knows for sure, and in this case, it isn't important. Many times, the Lord gives us the names of people – and their names mean something relevant to the lesson, or teaching, going on. Not this time. But a powerful, often underestimated admonition of the highest order is given here. One that should be on the lips of preachers in every pulpit of every church in the world. But of course it's not – because the pulpits of this world are *filled with Lot's wives!* There are expositors who claim she is likely from Sodom, and that Lot didn't meet her until he moved there, but we really don't have much if any Bible for the proposition. In fact, we have Bible for the notion that Lot had been with his wife for some many years prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (as they had AT LEAST two daughters of marrying age, and probably others who were already married). It is probable that he had at least four daughters (two virgins and at least two who were married). The support for this comes in the text:

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. – Gen. 19:14

The Hebrew word for 'sons in law' there is *chathan* (khaw-thawn)

1) son-in-law, daughter's husband, bridegroom, husband

By contrast, the Hebrew word *aras* (aw-rahhs) means:

1) betrothed or engaged to (a husband – but neither marriage ceremony nor consummation yet occurring)

That word *aras* appears in scripture 11 times. So in Gen. 19:14, it is possible that the 'sons in law' spoken of were the ones who were *going* to marry Lot's two virgin daughters, but it is more likely, because of the language, that Lot and his wife have more daughters than the two, who were already married – and he appealed to their husbands – his sons in law. That would have been wholly appropriate. It would be like me going across to tell Jacob (in concern for not only him, but for Taylor and for their children) that I have angels in my home who are warning that all the

people in Topeka are going to be destroyed by God's hand – and they say it's happening tomorrow, so let's go! That's who I'd go to. All this to say that Lot had been with his wife long enough to have married daughters and marrying age daughters (there are some expositors who claim Lot's daughters to be 'step daughters' - from Lot's wife's previous husband), but there is no scriptural support for that whatsoever, and seems like a bunch of mental gymnastics rather than solid, doctrinal searching the scripture for learning, admonition and edification.

Lot's wife was a professor of religion, and enjoyed many religious privileges.

J.C. Ryle: In the days of Abraham and Lot, true saving religion was scarce upon earth: there were no Bibles, no ministers, no churches, no tracts, no missionaries. The knowledge of God was confined to a few favored families; the greater part of the inhabitants of the world were living in darkness, ignorance, superstition and sin. Not one in a hundred perhaps had . . . such good example, such spiritual society, such clear knowledge, such plain warnings — as Lot's wife. Compared with millions of her fellow creatures in her time, Lot's wife was a favored woman. She had a godly man for her husband; she had Abraham, the father of the faithful, for her uncle by marriage. The faith, the knowledge and the prayers of these two righteous men could have been no secret to her. It is impossible that she could have dwelt in tents with them for any length of time, without knowing whose they were, and whom they served. Religion with them was no mere formal business; it was the ruling principle of their lives and the mainspring of all their actions. All this Lot's wife must have seen and known. This was no small privilege. When Abram first received the promises, it is probable that Lot's wife was there. When he built his altar by his tent between Hai and Bethel, it is probable she was there. When her husband was taken captive by Chedorlaomer and delivered by God's intervention, she was there. When Melchizedek, king of Salem, came forth to meet Abraham with bread and wine, she was there. When the angels came to Sodom and warned her husband to flee, she saw them (and she saw them blind the wicked mob around her door); when they took them by the hand and led them out of the city, she was one of those whom they helped to escape. Once more, I say, these were no small privileges. Yet what good effect had all these privileges on the heart of Lot's wife? None at all. Notwithstanding all her opportunities and means of grace, notwithstanding all her special warnings and messages from Heaven — she lived and died graceless, godless, impenitent and unbelieving. The form of religion which she had was kept up for fashion's sake and not from feeling; it was a cloak worn for the sake of pleasing her company — but not from any sense of its value. She did as others did around her in Lot's house; she conformed to her husband's ways; she made no opposition to his religion; she allowed herself to be passively towed along in his wake; but all this time her heart was wrong in the sight of God. The world was in her heart — and her heart was in the world. In this state she lived, and in this state she died.

Spurgeon: It needs often to be repeated that ties of blood are no guarantees of grace. You may be the wife of the saintliest man of God and yet be a daughter of Belial. Or you may be the husband of one of the King's daughters and yet be yourself a castaway. You may be the child of a prophet

and yet the curse of the prophet's God may light upon you. Or you may be the father of a most gracious family and yet still be an alien to the commonwealth of Israel. No earthly relationship can possibly help us if we are personally destitute of the spiritual life. Our first birth does not avail us in the kingdom of God, for that which is born of the flesh at its very best is flesh and is prone to sin and will certainly perish. We must be born again, for only the new birth, which is of the Spirit and from above, will bring us into covenant bonds.

You may have spiritual advantages of every description; you may live in the full sunshine of rich opportunities and means of grace; you may enjoy the best preaching and the choicest instruction; you may dwell in the midst of light, knowledge, holiness and good company. All this may be — and yet you yourself may remain unconverted, and at last be lost forever. It is all a mistake. It is an entire delusion. It requires something more than privileges for souls to be saved. Joab was David's captain; Gehazi was Elisha's servant; Demas was Paul's companion; Judas Iscariot was Christ's disciple, and Lot's wife was...Lot's wife. These all died in their sins. They went down to the *pit* — in spite of knowledge, warnings and opportunities; and they all teach us that it is not privileges alone, that men need. They need the grace of the Holy Spirit to finally bend their fleshly minds away from worldliness. Let us *value* religious privileges — but let us not *rest entirely* upon them. Let us desire to have the benefit of them in all our movements in life — but let us not put them in the place of Christ. Let us put Christ in the place of every other thing.

J.C. Ryle: I ask the children of Christian parents to mark well what I am saying. It is the highest privilege to be the child of a godly father and mother, and to be brought up in the midst of many prayers. It is a blessed thing indeed to be taught the gospel from our earliest infancy and to hear of sin and Jesus and the Holy Spirit and holiness and Heaven — from the first moment we can remember anything. But, oh, take heed that you do not remain barren and unfruitful in the sunshine of all these privileges; beware lest your heart remains hard, impenitent and worldly, despite the many advantages you enjoy. You cannot enter the kingdom of God on the credit of your parent's religion. You must eat the bread of life for yourself, and have the witness of the Spirit in your own heart. You must have repentance of your own, faith of your own and sanctification of your own. If not, you are no better than Lot's wife. I pray God that all professing Christians in these days may lay these things to heart. May we never forget that privileges alone cannot save us. Light and knowledge and faithful preaching and abundant means of grace and the company of holy people — are all great blessings and advantages. Happy are those who have them! But, after all, there is one thing without which privileges are useless — that one thing is the grace of the Holy Spirit. Lot's wife had many privileges; but Lot's wife had no grace!

From all appearances, Lot's wife went some way towards being saved, or delivered.

Spurgeon: Mistress Lot so far believed the message that came to her about the destruction of the city that she was aroused. She rose early as her husband did and she prepared to leave the house. She ran down the streets, she passed the city gate, she reached the open plain along with her

husband. She was willing for a while to run with him, following his example. She did so for a considerable distance till she began to think over what she was doing and to consider what she was leaving and then she slackened her pace and lingered behind. Remember, then, that she did go part of the way towards safety and yet she perished. And so many may go part of the way towards Christ and they may go a little way out of the world, but if their hearts still linger with the ungodly, they will perish, despite all. There is one very solemn thought and that is that the angel's hand had pressed her wrist. When they said, "Up, get you gone" and Lot lingered—the men laid hold upon his hand and the hand of his wife. So it is expressly said. An angel's hand had pressed her wrist to draw her forth to safety and she had gone a little way under that sacred constraint and yet she perished. Some of you may have had spiritual touches upon the conscience and heart which you will never be able to quite forget and the responsibility of this will cling to you, though you have drawn back from godliness and your heart cries after vanity and lusts after its idols. This woman was actually out of Sodom and she was almost in Zoar, the refuge city, and yet she perished. How near she was to the little city of escape I cannot tell, but she was certainly almost there and yet she perished. Almost saved, but not quite. Let me repeat those words, for they describe some of you who are present at this hour and they may be your epitaph if you do not mind what you are about, "ALMOST SAVED, BUT NOT QUITE." Escaped from the vilest form of sin, but not truly in Christ. The mind not weaned from its idols, iniquity not given up in the soul, though perhaps given up in outward deed. "Remember Lot's wife."

Lot's wife left Sodom with him on the day when Sodom was destroyed; she *looked back* toward the city from behind her husband (rather than follow his current example), against God's express command; she was struck dead at once and turned into a pillar of salt! And the Lord Jesus Christ holds her up as a beacon to His church. The sin of Lot's wife is given by the Holy Spirit in a few short words:

But his (Lot's) wife looked back from behind him (her husband), and she became a pillar of salt.
– Gen. 19:26

Lot's wife looked back. Period. This is the sum and substance of her sin. Does that sin seem small in the eyes of any Christian? Does her fault appear trifling, or of a minimal harm, to any? This feeling, I fear, arises in the hearts of many who claim to be Christians. There was far more in that look than first strikes at the sensibilities. It implied far more than it expressed. That look, albeit a seemingly small thing, told of her worldly disobedience. It told of her true character. It told of her proud unbelief, though she was running to escape and was given the privileged means to do so. But above these things, it told of her secret love for the world. Why secret? She must have given signals, all along, (perhaps even in capitulation) that she was religious. She was around religious events, and had a righteous husband around A LOT (no pun intended).

JC Ryle: *This aspect of our subject deserves special attention; let us focus our minds and hearts upon it. I believe it to be the part to which the Lord Jesus particularly intends to direct us. I believe He would have us observe that Lot's wife was lost by looking back to the world. Her profession was at one time fair and specious — but she never really gave up the world. She seemed at one time in the road to safety — but even then the lowest and deepest thoughts of her heart were for the world. The immense danger of worldliness is the grand lesson which the Lord Jesus means us to learn. Oh, that we may all have an eye to see and a heart to understand!*

Remember Lot's wife! Remember the sin of Lot's wife! Look at how we can very easily see it as our sin! Let us seek the face of God to safeguard us against this pernicious, oft-justified, overlooked, denied and entangling epidemic sin of our time! So much to do – so much to see – so much to titillate the mind – so many rationalizations against its injuries to our souls, minds, hearts. Lot's wife was no murderess, adulteress, thief or lesbian! She was Lot's wife! What she was was a professor of religion, who had secretly been laying up worldly treasure (experiences, delights, ideas, etc.) in her heart and in that moment, she looked back. If we think we can just lounge in and habituate our minds and senses in the hot tub of this world's delights - that seems like a delicious, warm depth of fragrant glitter gel but is in reality a vat of vile, putrid dung that acts as a constant assault on our souls, minds and hearts – the very smoky pie finger of Satan himself – custom-designed for any one of us, then we are foolish and will fall.

J.C. Ryle: *There are (many) baptized people in our churches who are armored against immorality and infidelity — and yet fall victims to the love of the world. There are (many) who run well for a season and seem to bid fair to reach heaven — but by and by give up the race and (secretly) turn their backs on Christ altogether (and many are somewhere in that process). And what has stopped them? Have they found the Bible not true? Have they found the Lord Jesus fail to keep His word? No, not at all. But they have caught the epidemic disease — they are infected with the love of this world! I appeal to every true-hearted evangelical minister who reads this message — I ask him to look around his congregation. I appeal to every old-established Christian — I ask him to look around the circle of his acquaintances. I am sure that I am speaking the truth. I am sure that it is high time to remember the sin of Lot's wife. How many children of religious families begin well — and end ill! In the days of their childhood, they seem full of religion. They can repeat texts and hymns in abundance; they have spiritual feelings and convictions of sin; they profess love to the Lord Jesus, and desires after Heaven; they take pleasure in going to church and hearing sermons; they say things which are treasured up by their fond parents as indications of grace; they do things which make relations say, "What manner of child will this be?" But, alas, how often their goodness vanishes like the morning cloud, and like the dew that passes away! The boy becomes a young man — and cares for nothing but amusements, sports, reveling and excess. The girl becomes a young woman — and cares for nothing but dress, mirthful company, novel reading and excitement. Where is the spirituality which once appeared to promise so fair? It is all gone; it is*

buried; it is overflowed by the love of the world. They walk in the steps of Lot's wife! They look back!

Ryle (cont'd): How many married people do well in religion, to all appearance, until their children begin to grow up — and then they fall away! In the early years of their married life, they seem to follow Christ diligently and to witness a good confession. They regularly attend the preaching of the gospel; they are fruitful in good works; they are never seen in vain and dissipated society. Their faith and practice are both sound, and walk hand in hand. But, alas, how often a spiritual blight comes over the household, when a young family begins to grow up, and sons and daughters have to be brought forward in life. A leaven of worldliness begins to appear in their habits, dress, entertainments and employment of time. Where is the decided line of separation which they once observed? Where is the unswerving abstinence from worldly amusements which once marked their course? It is all forgotten! It is all laid aside, like an old almanac. A change has come over them — the spirit of the world has taken possession of their hearts. They walk in the steps of Lot's wife. They look back.

Little by little, beloved, any can secretly lose their first love — obedience to and minds and hearts excited by the love of Christ. Little by little, beloved, the 'things seen' can push out the 'things unseen' in our minds and hearts. Not all at once, but little by little. And, like a plague of locusts, the things seen can eat up every green thing in our souls. Once fixed, zealous and unswerving in their faith, the "love of other things" has taken possession of their hearts and choked the good seed of the Word. The money of the world, the rewards of the world, the vocational positions in the world, the influence and perceived importance in the world, the advancements of the world, the literature of the world, the music of the world, the images of the world, the stories of the world, the honors of the world — have now the first place in their affections. It is easy, and hard to spot — even in oneself — when men secretly conform themselves to the world, even if they keep up the Christian character in a measure. But their conversation becomes more earthly and about earthly things and they cease, little by little, to disregard the opinions of man. And beware, beloved — men can blind their own consciences with specious arguments on this subject, and can validate their positive worldliness by talking of the 'duties of their station in life.' Maybe not all of these signals are exhibited in one example — but all are earmarks of the corruption and danger. It is both very easy and very dangerous to walk in the steps of Lot's wife.

*J.C. Ryle: Beware of a half-hearted religion! Beware of following Christ from any secondary motive, to please relations and friends, to keep in with the custom of the place or family in which you reside, to appear respectable and have the reputation of being religious. **Follow Christ for His own sake, if you follow Him at all. Be thorough, be real, be honest, be sound, be whole-hearted. If you have any religion at all — let your religion be real.** See that you do not sin the sin of Lot's wife! Beware of ever supposing that you may go too far in religion — and of secretly trying to keep in with the world. I want no reader of this message to become a hermit, a monk or a nun.*

I wish everyone to do his real duty in that state of life to which he is called. But I do urge on every professing Christian who wishes to be happy — the immense importance of making no compromise between God and the world. Do not try to drive a hard bargain, as if you wanted to give Christ as little of your heart as possible, and to keep as much as possible of the things of this life. Beware lest you overreach yourself — and end by losing all. Love Christ with all your heart and mind and soul and strength. Seek first the kingdom of God, and believe that then all other things (that are convenient for your soul) shall be added to you. Oh, it is a solemn saying of our Lord Jesus: "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). It is saddest of all to observe how many flatter themselves that it is all right with their souls — when it is all wrong, by reason of this love of the world. Gray hairs are here and there upon them — and they know it not. They began with Jacob and David and Peter — and they are likely to end with Esau and Saul and Judas Iscariot. They began with Ruth and Hannah and Mary — and they are likely to end with Lot's wife!

Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. — Lk. 17:33-36

That word rendered as the English 'taken' is the Greek word - *paralambano* (par-al-am-ban'-o) — it means: to take unto, to take up (with one's self), to join to one's self, an associate, a companion, to accept or acknowledge one to be such as he professes to be

Beloved, these that are taken are those, like Lot, who despite their folly are clothed in Christ's righteousness and who escape His great wrath, being the children of promise.

Spurgeon: *What says the Savior? "I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left." It matters not how close the association, the unbeliever must be divided from the living child of God. If you cling to the world and cast your eye back upon it, you must perish in your sin, notwithstanding that you have eaten and drunk with the people of God and have been as near to them in relationship as wife to husband or child to parent. This makes the remembrance of Lot's wife a very solemn thing to those who are allied by ties of kindred to the people of God.*

And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together. — Lk. 17:37

I feel that many expositors get this wrong — they attempt to extend the metaphor too far and thus become flummoxed by it. The eagles (or vultures, as some render it — it makes little

difference here) are imbued with a capacity to sense, or hone in on a thing. And if you see the one in the air, you know that the other is near.

We know that this generation is exceeding perverse in its disobedience to God. We know that God has set forth Sodom and Gomorrah as an example for those who should afterward live ungodly lives. We see the parallels, and they are important to us. We also know that Ham taught men to live and practice wickedness as before the flood, and was unspeakably vile and filthy toward his father Noah. We know that the Greco-Roman culture was chock full of sexual immorality and perversion – and the catamite was a generally accepted social figure throughout the ages in the Levant (Middle Eastern culture). Zig zag throughout Europe, in any age, and it has always been too filthy to even speak to in detail. Man has always been filthy, since Adam's fall. We must make sin exceeding sinful to our own eyes and in our preaching. But the exhortation of Christ, to his disciples, to 'Remember Lot's wife' is to us – not merely about the gross darkness of those sinful sexual practices, but about making a profession of religion, and even perhaps running well for a time, but secretly becoming a lost, worldly soul who is caught up in all of its trappings, and who secretly holds its offerings in higher regard than Christ. It is idolatry. Consider the scripture:

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. – 2Tim. 2:4-5

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. – Heb. 12:1-2

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. – 1Jn. 4:3-5

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – 1Jn. 2:15

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. – Col. 3:1-2

Spurgeon: *Fathers and husbands ought to take the lead in the management of their families, and parents are bound to arrange their households after a godly fashion. Do not say, "Oh, we cannot manage our families." You must do it. Eli failed in this and instead of being firm, he timidly said, "Do not so, my sons." Poor dear old Eli—he did not like to get into trouble with his sons by finding fault with them. But what did his softness cost him? The Lord smote his family because he had not ordered his household aright. If Christian men leave their families to go anyhow they choose, they will soon find the Lord has a controversy with them and if the children and if the wife should after all perish, it will be a horrible thought for the head of the household, even if he is a saved man, that it was his ill example which caused their ruin. It was partly Lot's own doing that his wife became what she was. If Lot had never gone to Sodom, his wife would not have perished near it (we know it had to happen, but this is no armchair quarterbacking – what men mean for evil, God means for good!) Look to yourselves lest you lead others astray. Keep near to God and you will be blessed and become a blessing to others.*

J.C. Ryle: *You cannot trifle forever — a time will come when you must be serious. You cannot put off your soul's concerns forever — a day will come when you must have a reckoning with God. You cannot be always singing and dancing and eating and drinking and dressing and reading and laughing and jesting and scheming and planning and moneymaking (and becoming important). The summer insects cannot always sport in the sunshine. The cold chilly evening will come at last and stop their sport forever. So will it be with you. You may put off pure religion now, and refuse the counsel of God's ministers— but the cool of the day is drawing on when God will come down to speak with you. And what will your end be? Will it be a hopeless one, like that of Lot's wife?*

Beloved, the Lord has mercifully blessed us as members of His body, with this ministry, with plenteous light to walk in; He brings us along in all ways, knowing and providing what is for our best and greatest good – largely armoring us against many of the grossest sins. But beware: the subtlety of worldliness – sitting in our living rooms, our workplaces, our phones – is omnipresent. Let us take serious, continuous heed to the exhortation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who commanded his disciples to **'Remember Lot's wife.'**

I love you all you dear brothers and sisters in Christ.